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and

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Editorial

THE Arthurian Society, composed of graduate and undergraduate members of the University of Oxford, was definitely formed on November 27th, 1927. The importance of Arthurian literature and the wide field for research that it offers are sufficient justification for the existence of a Society whose end is to foster the study of Arthurian Legend and Romance by research and by the public discussion of the results of such research.

It was naturally hoped that the members themselves would contribute the larger share of these studies, but that, from time to time, distinguished scholars outside Oxford would come and read papers. Both these hopes have in a large measure been fulfilled, and the present collection is a record of the first year's achievements.

Not every paper has been reproduced *in extenso*, and in some cases, where the paper has already been published elsewhere, it has been thought sufficient to refer to the book or review in which it is to be found.

At each meeting, of which two are held during a term, the Secretary is required to furnish a list of the studies in Arthurian Legend and Romance published since the previous meeting, and the bibliography here printed is the complete list of such works.

The support that has so far been received from both senior and junior members of the University, whose interests, though not in every case centred upon Medieval Literature, are yet wide enough to include Arthurian Legend and Romance, more than confirms its founders in the opinion that the creation of the Arthurian Society was not inopportune.

The Editors hope that these first printed records inaugurate a long series, and that it will be possible, by the regular publication of the Society's proceedings, to build up a comprehensive collection of Arthurian Studies, compensating, in some measure, for the absence of any review devoted entirely to the subject.

E. V.

H. J. B. G.

Some Points in the Grail Legend

(Read before the Society on October 25th, 1928.)

I DO not propose to-day to achieve the quest of the Grail. That mysterious vessel has stood for different things to different men, and its history opens many doors into mediæval thought and literature. Unfortunately, progress is barred by the fact that the earliest texts relating to it still need a critical editor; and I have myself no competence in Celtic or continental tongues.

I shall, therefore, mainly concern myself with some speculations as to the original conception which underlies the first appearance of the Grail in romance. And I shall assume that we have little means of arriving at that conception, except through an interpretation of Chrétien de Troyes, and perhaps his earliest continuators; that the later continuators, the verse of Robert de Boron, the prose romances, and the German and Welsh versions only represent attempts to fill out a story which the *Conte del Graal* had left imperfect; and that the Grail was not originally linked with the adventures of Perceval le Gallois. Many of those assumptions are disputable, and I am not sure that they are all sound. In particular, the obscure references of Wolfram von Eschenbach to a writer he calls Kyot may indicate some knowledge of a version which goes behind Chrétien. But whether that is so or not, I do not think that it much affects what I shall have to discuss.

I do not see how the Grail can be of Christian origin. But in Chrétien it is already to some extent Christianised. It is a holy and spiritual thing, and in it is a Host, by which the father of the lord of the Grail Castle is nourished. One cannot, of course, with that ardent Celticist, Professor Brown, treat the Host, without any authority from the known manuscripts, as an interpolation, merely because it is left out of the printed prose version of 1530; even though there is manuscript authority for

so treating the introduction, in a later passage not written by Chrétien, of Joseph of Arimathea. I take it that Chrétien meant in some way to link up the Grail with one of those Holy Blood relics, which were common enough in the Middle Ages. Miss Weston supposes this to have been a Holy Blood at Fécamp; surely perversely, since there was also, and still is, a famous Holy Blood at Bruges, brought there in the second crusade, and at Bruges ruled Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders, for whom Chrétien wrote. The book which Count Philip gave to Chrétien for the purposes of his poem is more likely to have been a legend of this than an earlier Grail romance. No doubt Chrétien had also such a romance, as well as one of Perceval, if indeed the two had not already been linked.

The story, as told by Chrétien, is, of course, familiar, and if I summarise it, it is merely for the sake of comparing the details of its Grail visit with those in the early continuations.

Perceval has left his forest home, visited Arthur's court, slain the Red Knight who took the cup from the royal board, and won the love of Blancheflor. These early adventures have nothing to do with the Grail, except that in the course of them an old knight warns Perceval not to be too talkative and inquisitive. Leaving Blancheflor in her castle, he rides to seek his mother. He reaches a river, where is a man fishing in a boat, who promises to lodge him for the night. He rides on to a castle. An old man is lying on a couch in a crowded hall. A squire enters, bearing a sword, on which is written that it will only break in one peril, known to him alone who forged it, and he alone can mend it. The host gives Perceval the sword, as judged and destined for him. A procession enters the hall. A valet carries a lance, from the point of which a drop of blood runs down to his hand. Perceval, remembering the warning of the old knight, asks no question. Two more valets bear gold candlesticks. A damsel brings a Grail, also of gold, adorned with precious stones, and the brightness which comes from it outshines the candles. Last come one with a silver carving dish. The procession crosses

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the hall, passing from chamber to chamber. Again Perceval refrains from asking whom they served from the Grail. A meal follows. A valet carves on the silver dish. At each course the Grail passes again. And Perceval is still silent. He goes to bed, and, waking on the morrow, finds the castle deserted and his horse and armour awaiting him. As he rides over the drawbridge, it is raised, so suddenly that he hardly escapes. In the forest he finds a maiden, who declares herself his cousin. She tells him that his host was the rich Fisher King, who has been wounded through the thighs in battle, and fishes for relaxation. If he had asked about the lance and Grail, the King would have been healed, and much good would have come of it. The sword will fail him in need, and must be mended by dipping in a lake where its maker, Trebuchet, lives. Perceval returns to Arthur's camp. Thither comes a loathly damsel, and repeats the reproaches of Perceval's cousin. His failure means death for knights, woe for wives, and shame for maidens in the Fisher's land. Perceval vows himself to the quest of the Grail.

Now Chrétien follows the adventures not of Perceval, but of Gawain, in the midst of which we learn abruptly that he, too, will seek, not the Grail, but the lance, and that the land to which it brings woe is Logres, which should be, not the Fisher's realm, but Arthur's. But Chrétien resumes Perceval, bringing him, after five years' wandering, in which he forgets God, to a hermit, who proves to be his uncle. The Fisher is another uncle, and the Grail serves the Fisher's father. There is neither pike, lamprey, nor salmon in it, but a single Host, which has kept him alive. The hermit then teaches Perceval a prayer, only to be used in great peril. Chrétien reverts to Gawain, and leaves the poem unfinished, without telling any more of Perceval or the Grail. He has not even told us what a Grail is. The name seems to be from the low Latin *cratalis*, and to signify a bowl or deep dish for serving food, rather than a cup.

Chrétien's fragment occupies about 10,000 lines. The next 24,000 lines are the most puzzling part of the poem. Some

critics find here only a single hand, that of a certain Wauchier de Denain. He does not, however, name himself until near the end, after the narrative has at long last returned to Perceval. And the balance of opinion is in favour of assigning the earlier part, which is wholly Gawain matter, to another writer, called for convenience Pseudo-Wauchier. This is the part of the poem where the absence of a critical edition is most baffling. The divergence of the manuscripts suggests that it has, in any event, undergone a good deal of interpolation. But the nucleus seems to show a style distinct from that either of Chrétien or of Wauchier. They are court-poets—*trouvères*. Pseudo-Wauchier is a minstrel. His work is full of the minstrel's characteristic appeals to his audiences, and of references to a great 'conte' from which he claims to draw. Minstrelsy is, of course, an earlier literary development than court-poetry, which is for readers, not hearers. But one must not infer from this that Pseudo-Wauchier wrote before Chrétien and Wauchier. The minstrel did not at once disappear, even from courts, when the *trouvère* came. And, in fact, it is clear that, to some extent at least, Pseudo-Wauchier is merely a continuator of Chrétien. He begins by taking up a Gawain adventure which Chrétien left unfinished, and conducting it to a reasonable conclusion. Of this section some manuscripts give a shorter and some a longer form, and the longer describes a visit of Gawain to the Grail Castle. I shall not dwell on this, because it is probably an interpolation and a mere variant of the adventure to which we shall come in a moment. Then follow two long sections. Probably both are interpolations, and one certainly is; it is a romance of Caradoc, unconcerned with either Gawain, or Perceval, or the Grail. A string of new Gawain adventures then begins, and in one of these we reach the Grail again.

Gawain has rescued an unknown knight, and is taking him to Arthur's court, when a javelin from an unseen hand slays the knight. Gawain puts on the knight's armour, and rides in search of his name. He enters a chapel, where a Black Hand comes through the window and extinguishes the light

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on the altar. Gawain rides on, past the limits of Britain, and at nightfall reaches the sea. There is a long causeway, overhung by branches. The sea beats upon it. Gawain's horse takes the bit between his teeth, and carries him unwilling along this path. The traverse is very picturesquely described. At midnight they reach a great hall, full of folk, who greet Gawain with joy. But when they look in his face they say: 'Tis not he whom we awaited,' and leave the hall. Gawain looks round in anger. He beholds a bier, and on it a dead body, and on the body the fragment of a sword, broken below the hilt. While Gawain stands perplexed, a procession of canons enter, and the vigil of the dead is chanted. The hall is now filled with folk again, who make weeping and lamentation. Then those whom Gawain first saw enter with cloths and napkins. There is a King, tall and strong of limb, not old but bald, fair and courteous. He bids Gawain sit. The Grail serves them. No hand holds it, but it comes and goes. Gawain knows not what to make of it. The King bids clear the hall and leaves Gawain alone. He sees a lance, fixed at the head of the daïs, with tapers before it. The blade is white as snow. It stands in a silver vessel, into which falls a stream of blood from the point. The King re-enters, bearing a sword. Weeping, he leads Gawain to the bier, and prays for revenge, 'so that the folk be once more joyful, and the land re-peopled, which by ye and this sword are wasted and made void.' He draws the sword; it is only a broken hilt. He bids Gawain join it to the fragment on the bier. Gawain tries, but in vain. The King leads him to another chamber, and tells him that he cannot achieve the quest, but may return. 'He who had undertaken the enterprise hath remained in your country. I know not what hath delayed him, but long have we awaited his coming.' Gawain may have what treasure he will, and may ask of the marvels. Gawain feels sleepy, but asks of the lance, the sword, and the dead knight. The lance is that of Longinus, who pricked Christ on the cross. The sword struck the blow which brought destruction on Logres, and laid the country waste. The King will tell who the slayer and the

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slain were. He weeps. But Gawain has fallen asleep. In the morning he is on a rock by the sea, and near him are his horse and armour. No castle is visible. He resolves to return. As he rides the land is rich with wood, water, and pastures. Yet it had been a waste land, and when Gawain asked of the lance, the waters flowed and the woods greened. 'So was the land in part re-peopled, but more might not be, since he had asked no more.' Folk meet him and bless him, and at the same time curse him for not asking of the Grail.

Pseudo-Wauchier turns to the adventures of Gawain's son. Presently Wauchier takes up the pen, and tells of Perceval. He is a poor writer, and has some very commonplace episodes. Once Perceval sees a light in the forest; it comes from the Grail, which the Fisher King carries with him to preserve him from mortal sin. And in the end he drifts back to the Grail Castle, entering on his way the chapel of the Black Hand, where now a dead knight lies on the altar. The Fisher King is still on his couch. A damsel carries in the Grail and another the lance; a squire follows with a broken sword. Perceval asks, not of these, but of the dead knight. He is bidden to join the pieces of the sword; and does so, imperfectly, for a crack is left. The quest is not yet fully achieved, but the King embraces him, and hails him as lord of his house.

Wauchier now, in his turn, stops abruptly. I believe that he gives us nothing which is not based, with a minimum of invention, upon what Chrétien and Pseudo-Wauchier had already written; and that any reconstruction of the original conception of the Grail must rest upon Chrétien's Perceval visit and Pseudo-Wauchier's Gawain visit alone. The relation between these two is not so clear. How far do they agree? Wherein do they differ?

They have in common the Grail itself and the banquet which it serves (not quite explicitly in Chrétien); the lance; a sword; the castle by the water; the visiting stranger; the kingly host; the unasked question; its reaction on the well-being of the land; the disappearance of the castle in the morning. But the divergence is at least as remarkable as the agreement.

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In Chrétien the Grail and lance enter in procession. In Pseudo-Wauchier they are seen independently. Nobody carries the Grail; it moves by itself. The lance is fixed in the hall. There is nothing to suggest that the vessel into which the lance bleeds is identical with the Grail. The silver carving-dish of Chrétien's procession, perhaps not very significant, is not there. Pseudo-Wauchier's sword has to be joined as part of the quest; it seems to serve no purpose, at the castle itself, in Chrétien. Gawain's horse, not Perceval's, bears him to the castle against his will. Pseudo-Wauchier's King is robust, Chrétien's maimed. He is a Fisher in Chrétien, not in Pseudo-Wauchier. Pseudo-Wauchier has no unseen old father, fed by the Grail. Chrétien has no dead knight wailed for on his bier. The evil state of the land is one of turbulence in Chrétien. In Pseudo-Wauchier it is definitely agricultural; the land has lost its fertility, and is waste.

What is the relation between the two accounts? Pseudo-Wauchier is certainly still to some extent continuing Chrétien. The expected visitor, who had tarried long, and for whom Gawain was at first taken, can only be Perceval. No doubt something of what Chrétien had written has been forgotten. Gawain must have heard of Perceval's adventure; was indeed present when the loathly lady came to upbraid Perceval. And in Chrétien he had vowed himself to seek the lance. He ought not, then, to see it with such surprise. But we need not be taken aback by such inconsistencies in a continuation.

The divergences, however, in the incidents at the castle itself can hardly be a matter of forgetfulness. And they seem too fundamental to be explained by a mere desire for artistic variation of detail. Moreover, although each writer has introduced elements both of chivalry and of Christianity, it is difficult for a reader of folk-tales to resist the conviction that these have been superimposed upon a story, which in its origin was neither Christian nor chivalric. And the folk-tale elements, the 'helpful' horse, the joining sword, and in particular the waste land, are certainly more obvious in Pseudo-Wauchier than in his predecessor. Did he bring these in from other

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stories known to him, or did he and Chrétien, directly or indirectly, use the same folk-tale as a source, and preserve different features from it? I incline to the latter solution.

I turn now to various interpretations which have been offered of the original motive. Alfred Nutt equated the Grail, lance, and sword with the talismans of the Celtic divinities, which appear in the *Second Battle of Moytura*, 'the ever-victorious spear of Lug, the irresistible sword of Nuada, and the never-failing caldron of the Dagda.' This analogy is not complete because the *Moytura* story names a fourth talisman, the stone of knowledge—'He under whom it would cry out was King of Ireland'—and of this there is no trace in our Grail visits, unless it is buried under Chrétien's silver carving-dish. It should perhaps be added that in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* the Grail itself is a stone, and has a power of election. No doubt there is a resemblance between the Grail and the caldron of the Dagda, which is only one of many vessels of abundance to be found, not only in Celtic legend, but in the folk-tales of divers peoples. They belong properly to the lords of the otherworld, from whom culture-heroes, such as Arthur, loot them. So far as the talismans play any active part in the *Battle of Moytura*, they help the gods to vanquish their adversaries. But we get no further towards understanding what was to happen at the Grail Castle. There is no suggestion that Perceval or Gawain was to carry away the talismans, or that the lance was to be used in an impending battle.

A theory put forward by Miss Weston has received from folk-lorists a measure of acceptance which somewhat amazes me. There were certain agricultural fertility cults of the Eastern Mediterranean, in which the worshippers mimed the death and resurrection of a vegetation spirit. There were weeping and lamentation around the bier of an Adonis or an Attis, and joy at his uprising. These ceremonies secured the fertility of the crops and herds, and of the human race. Ultimately they became, in much altered forms, the basis of some of the various religions which competed with Christianity in

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the Roman world of the third and fourth centuries. These were personal religions, and their aim was not agricultural fertility, but philosophic contact with the divine, and in particular an assurance of immortality. But the believers were banded in guilds, and in their ritual and the initiation of their members they made symbolic use of the old agricultural practices. The prevailing spirit of syncretism affected Christianity itself, and there seems to have been a heretical sect, which identified Attis with its own divinity, and shared in his mysteries. These were closely linked with those of Mithraism, the most important of the non-Christian religions, and particularly affected by soldiers, who carried it all over the Roman world, even to the limits of Britain. Women were excluded from the mysteries of Mithra, and for them the mysteries of Attis served instead. Miss Weston assumes, without evidence, that these also reached Britain. And she regards the Grail legend as the story of an initiation into this cult, an initiation *manqué*, since the failure to ask the required question barred progress. It is to be noted that the theory implies the unrecorded survival of the Attis cult in Britain from the fourth century to the twelfth, since Miss Weston supposes that Robert de Boron was familiar with the original significance of the Grail. This is, I think, frankly incredible. Nor does Miss Weston's reminder that Mithraism lingered in the Alps and Vosges to the fifth century go far to bridge a span of eight hundred years. Equally unconvincing are the detailed parallels which she arrays. There was weeping and lamentation around the bier in the Grail Castle. But other deaths have been mourned besides that of Attis. The achievement of the quest would have restored fertility to the land. But the goal of the mysteries had long ceased to be agricultural fertility. Miss Weston finds sexual symbols, such as the mysteries very likely used, in the lance and the Grail. No doubt there are analogies in many forms of nature worship. But I do not think that there is anything of the kind in the Grail story. A maiden carries the Grail, says Miss Weston, and a youth the lance. It is so in Chrétien, and it is not so in Pseudo-Wauchier,

but surely it has no significance. The lance bleeds into the Grail, says Miss Weston. It does not in Chrétien. I do not think that it does in Pseudo-Wauchier. It bleeds into a vessel, but that is not said to be the Grail. Then there is the unasked question. Certainly there were formulas to be learnt by the postulant in the mysteries, and things said, as well as things done, at the initiations. But we do not in fact know that the postulant was called on to ask a question. Finally, Miss Weston tells us that there are still correspondences to the Grail in the secret rituals of existing occult societies. It is very likely. But a secret oral tradition carries no proof of its origin or antiquity, and in fact the Grail legend was already extant in print and available as material for the syncretistic founders of Rosicrucianism in the sixteenth century. I reject Miss Weston *in toto*.

The views of Nutt and of Miss Weston are conflated in the recent book of Professor Loomis on *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*. He thinks that the Celts had a fertility cult with initiation rites of their own, more like the original Eastern rites than the later philosophised mysteries, and possibly derived from the east through that western door of access from the Mediterranean, of which Sir Arthur Keith has lately written. Strabo told of an island near Britain where sacrifices were offered to Demeter and Kore, like those in Samothrace. A sexual vessel and spear in these came to be identified with those of Lug and the Dagda, and Professor Loomis conjectures that the end of the Grail story was a ritual marriage between the destined hero and the damsel who bore the Grail. I must repeat that the story as we have it attaches no significance to the lady. But Professor Loomis identifies her with Perceval's sister and his love Blancheflor, and with the many loves of Gawain, and with most of the female divinities in Celtic and Greek mythology. I really do not know what to make of Professor Loomis. He has written some valuable papers upon the iconography of the Arthur legends. But he seems to think that anything which anybody ever said about the Grail, down to *Arthur of Little Britain* and Sir Thomas

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Malory, can be used indifferently for the reconstruction of the original story. This seems to me to defy any reasonable theory as to the methods of mediaeval writers and their relations to mythical or folk-lore sources. Of course, we know nothing of the details of any agricultural cults that may have developed on Celtic ground. Nor, in fact, do we know that the Grail story was of Celtic origin.

A different line is taken by Professor A. C. L. Brown. He regards the Grail story as a duplicate of that to which it is linked through Perceval, the rape of Arthur's cup by the Red Knight. Originally the older king at the Grail Castle was none other than the sleeping Arthur. Both stories are to be explained by the Irish *Battle of Moytura*. Here the gods are at war with giants, who have stolen their talismans, and thus enchanted the divine land. The destined hero, Lug or Perceval, recovers the talismans and is thus enabled to remove the enchantment. Unfortunately, Professor Brown has rewritten all the stories before proceeding to explain them. Lug fights, in the *Battle of Moytura*, with an enchanted spear, but its relation to the four talismans of the Celtic gods is left quite uncertain. These are barely mentioned in the obscure narratives of the *Battle* which have reached us. They seem to remain inert, and certainly not said to have been stolen by the giants. Nor is there anything to show that the cup taken from Arthur's table was a talisman. As we hear of it, it is an ordinary cup. That Arthur was in woe at the insult, and cheered up when the cup was recovered, is really not, as Professor Brown thinks, proof of its magical qualities. The insult is purely chivalric. Nor does anyone steal the Grail. There are stories of Finn, in which a demon comes through a window and troubles a feast. Professor Brown is reduced to the conjecture that this once happened at the Grail Castle, and that the incident has been transferred to the Chapel of the Black Hand, which Gawain passes on the way thither. This is surely a masterpiece of perversion.

I find all these theories unsatisfactory. It is only with diffidence that I sketch another. The early history of the priest-

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kingship forms a large part of the subject of Frazer's *Golden Bough*. He traces it to the human representative of the vegetation spirit, imbued with its fertilising power, and annually slain and replaced by a successor for the renewal of that power. But of course kingship went through many stages. The victim became a medicine-man, securing fertility by means of magic rites and implements. He was not content to die at the end of a year, and prolonged his reign. But the energy of natural production was still bound up with his vitality, and when that failed he must at last die and a successor be found. This stage is still represented by the Shilluk tribe of the White Nile.

‘The King, though regarded with reverence, must not be allowed to become old or feeble, lest, with the diminishing vigour of the ruler, the cattle should sicken and fail to bear increase, the crops should rot in the field, and men die in ever-growing numbers. One of the signs of failing energy is the King’s inability to fulfil the desires of his wives, of whom he has a large number. When this occurs the wives report the fact to the chiefs, who condemn the King to death forthwith, communicating the sentence to him by spreading a white cloth over his face and knees during his mid-day slumber. Formerly the King was starved to death in a hut, in company with a young maiden. It is believed that he is now strangled.’¹

And how is a royal successor appointed? Ultimately, of course, through heredity, either in the male or female line. The medicine-man has established not only himself but his dynasty. Often again by election, among the members of the royal family, among the chiefs, or among all comers. The choice may rest with the women of the harem. That is fortuitous enough. But there are more fortuitous methods still. The candidates may compete in battle, in a race, even in answering riddles. They do that in Perides. Often again there is some method of divination. Of this there are many

¹ I adapt the summary in J. L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, 56.

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traces in folk-tales, of which a large collection may be found in a paper by Dr. Hartland on *The Voice of the Stone of Destiny*.² The divination may be by dream or omen. In Persia, according to Herodotus, the chief whose horse neighed first was chosen. It may be by accident; the first stranger at the gate is taken. But often there is some more symbolical sign of divine will, if you like to put it so. In legends of papal elections, a candidate's taper bursts in flame, or a bell rings when he passes under it, or a dove descends on his head. These are Christianised in sentiment, but they echo the folk-tales. In many of the latter the agent of the divination is something connected with the former King. Here, too, a royal bird descends. The royal horses go unguided to a house. The royal elephant kneels before a man, or lifts him on to its back, or puts a garland round his neck. And finally the choice may rest not with the royal animals or birds, but with the royal insignia. The crown floats through the air to a head. The chariot bearing the sword, parasol, fan, diadem, and slippers stops. The jewelled shoes fit, the throne remains steadfast, the diadem unshaken. The Inisfail, as we have seen, roars. And what are the insignia but the wonder-working instruments of the medicine-man, become talismans? Is it not possible that the Grail story was originally one of the choice of a successor by the royal talismans themselves? The broken sword of royalty is pieced at his touch; that fits well enough. And the question, 'Who is served by the Grail?' May not the answer, in some symbolic form, have been, 'We serve thee, O King.' Perhaps the spear of victory, which was dry, began to bleed again, and the vessel of abundance, which was empty, was refilled. And the land, which was waste through the lost virility of the old King, smitten like the King of the Shilluk in his organs of increase, gives of its fruits once more. Of course, the romancers have altered much. The Grail King has somehow been duplicated. The testing was to have been spread out over a succession of visits. Chrétien, in particular, has obscured the purpose of the sword, and probably con-

² *Folk-Lore*, xiv, 28.

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templated some Christianisation of the Grail and lance as Holy Blood relics. One does not know how he would have worked it out. And he has made Perceval a kinsman of the Grail house. But that is common in the folk-tales. They have passed through minds familiar with the principle of heredity. It is often not the kingdom which the stranger wins, but the hand of the King's daughter. Divination confirms rather than confers a claim. I doubt whether there is any significance in the fishing. The tale may originally have been told of a fisher-folk. We do not know where it comes from. Pseudo-Wauchier seems to refer to himself as a man of Lothian. Nor do we know whether it attached itself first to Perceval or to Gawain. Stories of Gawain seem to have hung about the north of Britain. But probably it was originally anonymous. The Fisher King is given no personal name in the *Conte del Graal*.

E. K. CHAMBERS.

Un des plus anciens textes relatifs à Arthur

par

EDMOND FARAL

Professeur au Collège de France

*(Shorthand report of part of an address to the Arthurian Society
on January 26th, 1929.)*

MESDAMES, MESDEMOISELLES, MESSIEURS,

Les paroles que vient de prononcer votre Président, M. Eugène Vinaver, sont beaucoup trop bienveillantes à mon égard. Je l'en remercie; mais tant de compliments immérités ne sont pas sans me gêner. Je comparais, pour parler du roi Arthur, devant un tribunal vénérable, le plus compétent et le plus savant qui existe; et je crains que l'annonce trop prometteuse qui vous a été faite de ma modeste communication ne soit suivie, quand vous m'aurez entendu, d'une trop légitime déception.

Quelles que soient, à ce sujet, mes appréhensions, et quelques raisons que j'aie de les croire fondées, j'espère du moins que vous me saurez gré de ma simplicité et de mon honnête modestie. J'aurais pu chercher à vous plaire en composant pour vous, à l'occasion d'Arthur, quelque page brillante: j'ai préféré faire honneur à votre érudition en traitant, ce soir, d'un tout petit sujet. Je n'y mettrai point de prétention et je me tiendrai pour largement satisfait si j'ai pu seulement vous communiquer le sentiment que les petites questions ont quelquefois leur intérêt.

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Les textes qui, antérieurement à l'année 1130, se rapportent à Arthur sont, vous le savez, très peu nombreux et c'est pourquoi ils méritent qu'on les soumette à une critique

rigoureuse qui en détermine exactement la valeur. Il en est un, parmi eux, qui m'a paru particulièrement digne d'être proposé à votre attention parce qu'il n'as pas été étudié jusqu'ici, que je sache, avec tout le soin désirable, bien qu'on s'en soit beaucoup servi : ce texte, c'est celui que fournissent les *Miracula sanctae Mariae Laudunensis* qu' Herman de Tournai dédia à Barthélemy, évêque de Laon de l'année 1113 à l'année 1151. On trouve, en effet, dans cet ouvrage, les éléments d'information que voici. L'église de Laon avait été incendiée en 1112, le cinquième jour de la semaine de Pâques. Les membres du chapitre, pour trouver les fonds nécessaires à la reconstruction, entreprirent aussitôt une tournée de quêtes en pays français, emmenant avec eux des reliques de la Vierge, à qui était dédiée leur église, et suscitant, grâce à elles, d'utiles miracles. Dès l'automne on put se mettre aux travaux, et si activement, qu'au début de 1113 l'église était en grande partie restaurée. Cependant la Quadragésime était arrivée et d'assez nombreux travaux restaient à exécuter, pour lesquels l'argent recueilli s'avérait insuffisant. Alors, 15 jours avant les Rameaux, une nouvelle mission se mit en route pour aller quêter en Angleterre. Elle visita successivement Douvres, Winchester, Exeter, Salisbury, Wilton et, de nouveau, Exeter. Puis comme les clercs s'étaient rendus en Domnonée, on leur montra à Bodmin la chaire et le four du roi Arthur, fameux dans la légende bretonne, et dont on disait qu'il avait été le seigneur de cette terre. Un ancien clerc de l'église de Laon, nommé Algardus, qui devait devenir plus tard évêque de Coutances, en Normandie, les reçut avec empressement. Des miracles se produisirent : une jeune fille, nommée Kenehellis, aveugle de naissance, recouvra la vue ; un jeune homme, sourd de naissance, recouvra l'ouïe. Mais un miracle d'un autre genre marqua aussi cette visite. Un paralytique de la main veillait auprès de la châsse, implorant sa guérison. Comme il arrivait communément entre Bretons et Français, qui se disputaient au sujet du roi Arthur, cet homme se prit de querelle avec l'un des gardiens de la châsse, nommé Haganello, parent

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de Guy, l'archidiacre de Laon. Il prétendait qu'Arthur était encore en vie. Une rixe éclata, des gens armés envahirent l'église; et le sang aurait coulé, si Algardus n'était intervenu. Pour châtement de ces excès, la Vierge refusa le miracle dont elle était priée Deux jours avant la Nativité de la Vierge la mission était de retour à Laon.

Tels sont les faits. Mais il ne suffit pas d'avoir extrait du texte d'Herman la substance qu'il contient : il faut aussi tenir compte de la forme particulière sous laquelle ce texte se présente, une forme qui lui confère une très grande autorité au moins à première vue. En effet, en cette partie de son ouvrage, à partir du moment où commence le récit du voyage fait en Angleterre par les chanoines de Laon, Herman a cessé de parler en son nom : il a cédé la parole à ceux qui avaient été de l'expédition et il s'est borné à transcrire le récit que ces voyageurs avaient fourni à leurs confrères de Laon au lendemain de leur retour. Ici, ce n'est donc plus Herman qui raconte : ce sont les chanoines missionnaires, ce sont les témoins des faits; et la narration revêt cette forme toute personnelle : ' Nous sommes partis; nous avons vu ceci, nous avons fait cela; et nous voici de retour.'

Dans ces conditions, quelle que soit la date où Herman a composé son ouvrage, il paraît bien que le récit dont il s'est donné comme le simple transcripteur doit être rapporté à une date très proche des événements, c'est-à-dire aux environs immédiats de l'année 1113. Il semble par conséquent attesté que, dès cette même année, on montrait dans les environs de Bodmin, en Cornouailles, une chaire et un four dont on disait qu'ils avaient appartenu au roi Arthur, et que, toujours dès cette même année, les Bretons de cette contrée croyaient au retour de ce prince.

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Cependant, si l'on examine les choses de plus près, on s'aperçoit que le récit des chanoines contient, sous la forme où l'a reproduit Herman, plusieurs éléments qui n'ont pas pu en faire partie en l'année 1113.

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1°. Parlant de certains objets précieux qu'ils avaient rapportés d'Angleterre, les missionnaires, d'après le texte d'Herman, font la remarque que ces objets étaient 'encore' conservés dans l'église de Laon. 'Encore,' *adhuc*, et non pas 'maintenant,' *nunc* : en sorte qu'on se trouve reporté à une date sensiblement postérieure aux événements, sans que, d'ailleurs, l'on puisse dire de combien.

2°. Les missionnaires, d'après le texte d'Herman, racontent qu'au début de leur voyage ils traversèrent le Vermandois et furent reçus par Raoul, père d'Ivon, qui tenait la ville. Le Raoul dont il est ici question était, selon toute apparence, Raoul le Grand, fils de Hugues et d'Adelaïde, qui était né en 1094. Bien qu'en fait Raoul ne soit devenu comte de Vermandois que lorsque sa mère lui céda le comté, c'est-à-dire en 1117, on voit que certaines Lettres du roi Louis le Gros le qualifient de comte dès l'année 1109. D'ailleurs, notre texte ne l'appelle point comte de Vermandois, mais seulement *domnus Radolphus, castri princeps et possessor*; et rien n'empêche que, malgré son jeune âge, ce seigneur ait, dès l'année 1113, tenu le château de Nesle. Mais Raoul n'était né qu'en 1094 : en 1113, il n'avait que 19 ans. Comment se pouvait-il qu'à cette date il eût déjà un fils, et vraisemblablement un fils dont déjà l'on s'occupait? Supposons que ce fils, cet Ivon, du reste inconnu par ailleurs, ait intéressé particulièrement les Laonnais parce qu'il serait venu comme élève à leurs célèbres écoles (c'est l'hypothèse qui permet de lui attribuer la notoriété la plus précoce) : il n'en est pas moins vrai que, même en ce cas, les faits sont inacceptables à la date de 1113, et il n'est pas possible que Raoul ait pu avoir si tôt un fils en âge d'être envoyé aux écoles de Laon.

3°. Les missionnaires d'après le texte d'Herman, racontent qu'au moment où ils se présentèrent à Cantorbéry, ils trouvèrent sur le siège archiépiscopal un personnage bien connu d'eux, qui avait suivi précédemment à Laon les leçons d'Anselme : c'était l'archevêque Guillaume. Or Guillaume n'a occupé le siège de Cantorbéry qu'à partir de l'année 1123.

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4°. Les missionnaires, d'après le texte d'Herman, racontent qu'arrivés à Bodmin ils furent accueillis par le clerc Algardus, qui avait été jadis à Laon et qui devait recevoir plus tard l'évêché de Coutances en Normandie. Or Algardus n'a occupé le siège de Coutances qu'à partir de l'année 1135.

A ne pas tenir compte des deux premières remarques, qui ne fournissent pas, quant aux dates, les éléments d'une conclusion précise, il résulte au moins des deux dernières :

1°. Que les missionnaires n'ont pas pu rencontrer en 1113 à Cantorbéry l'archevêque Guillaume, qui n'accéda au siège qu'en 1123;

2°. Que ces missionnaires n'ont pas pu savoir en 1113 qu'Algardus, clerc de Bodmin, deviendrait en 1135 évêque de Coutances.

Par conséquent, dans le récit des missionnaires, tel que l'a rapporté Herman, se rencontrent au moins deux traits choquants : une erreur grossière et manifeste en ce qui concerne l'archevêque Guillaume et, en ce qui concerne l'évêque Algardus, une information que personne ne pouvait posséder en 1113.

Qu'est-ce donc à dire, sinon que le récit des chanoines de Laon, sous la forme où l'a reproduit Herman, ne peut pas être antérieur à l'année 1135, date où Algardus devint évêque de Coutances?

La question se pose dès lors de savoir ce que représente au juste la narration fournie par Herman. Faut-il considérer que le premier auteur du récit l'a fait exactement sous la même forme qu'Herman et que, par conséquent, la rédaction d'Herman reproduit la narration en sa teneur originale? Ou bien faut-il considérer qu'Herman, en reproduisant un récit antérieur, a usé d'une certaine liberté et qu'il ne s'est pas interdit d'introduire çà et là dans ce récit des gloses plus ou moins opportunes?

La première hypothèse ne doit pas être écartée trop précipitamment. S'il paraît difficile que le récit ait contenu dès l'origine les anachronismes dont il souffre, ce n'est pourtant

pas une impossibilité absolue. Qu'on réfléchisse au caractère particulier de cette narration, qui énumère des miracles dont il est bien permis de penser que tous ne se sont pas produits et dont les chanoines ne pouvaient se donner comme les témoins oculaires qu'en faisant quelque violence à leur conviction intime. Ces chanoines pouvaient-ils croire, en vérité, à cette histoire, consignée dans leur récit, d'un terrible dragon sorti de la mer pour vomir des flammes sur la ville de Christchurch, qu'ils auraient vu de leurs propres yeux, et qu'ils auraient mis en fuite par la présentation des reliques qu'ils portaient? Si, parmi tous les miracles dont s'orne leur récit, il en est un auquel on puisse aisément accorder crédit, c'est bien plutôt celui du paralytique de Bodmin, dont la Vierge châtia la turbulence en refusant de le guérir. Il faut donc bien se dire qu'une composition du genre de celle qui nous occupe contient, jusqu'en ses parties vives, des traits suspects et qui ne sont pas le signe d'une parfaite sincérité. Mais alors, s'il y a eu dès l'origine altération des faits, ne convient-il pas de refuser à cette composition le caractère d'une relation authentique présentée par les chanoines missionnaires? Et cela reviendrait à dire que l'on se trouve en présence d'une fabrication. Fabrication de quelle date? Fabrication de quel faussaire? On ne saurait dire au juste. Mais pourquoi pas une fabrication postérieure à 1135? Pourquoi pas une fabrication d'Herman lui-même?

Cependant, si maladroits que soient souvent les faussaires, on hésite à accepter l'idée que tant de grossiers anachronismes aient pu échapper à l'auteur premier des *Miracula*. C'est pourquoi l'on se range plus volontiers à la seconde des deux hypothèses possibles, à savoir qu'Herman a interpolé le récit des chanoines missionnaires. En ce cas, les traits choquants du texte s'expliquent aisément: Herman a pu se tromper en écrivant que Guillaume était archevêque de Cantorbéry en 1113, et il était naturel qu'il sût, après 1135, qu'Algardus était devenu évêque de Coutances. Quant à son procédé, qui consiste à gloser au moyen d'informations personnelles, et sans en avertir, le récit d'autrui, il n'éveillait pas autrefois les mêmes

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scrupules qu'aujourd'hui : par exemple, un bon chroniqueur, comme Robert de Torigni, n'a pas craint, en transcrivant une lettre d'Henri de Huntingdon à son ami Garin le Breton, de la bourrer d'interpolations.

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Quoiqu'il en soit, et à quelque conclusion qu'on s'arrête touchant les rapports du texte d'Herman avec le récit original, il est clair qu'il ne suffit pas qu'un fait ait trouvé place dans ce texte pour qu'on le considère comme attesté dès l'année 1113.

La chose saute aux yeux s'il est vrai que le récit original lui-même n'a été qu'une fabrication postérieure à 1135.

Mais, même en admettant qu'Herman ait recueilli de la bouche ou de la plume d'autrui un récit qu'il aurait ensuite plus ou moins glosé, même en cette hypothèse, qui conserve à l'ensemble de son texte l'autorité la plus grande, il ne peut s'agir que d'une autorité très limitée. Car comment déterminer jusqu'à quel point Herman a interpolé ? On reconnaîtra facilement son intervention quand on lira les passages de son texte relatifs soit à Ivon, fils de Raoul de Nesle, soit à Guillaume, archevêque de Cantorbéry, soit à Algardus, évêque de Coutances. Mais quand on lira dans ce même texte des renseignements du même genre, relatifs à divers autres personnages que les chanoines auraient rencontrés sur leur route ; quand on lira qu'ils avaient été reçus à Exeter par l'archidiacre Robert, qui avait été l'élève d'Anselm à Laon,—que des parents de l'évêque de Salisbury, nommés Alexander et Nigellus, avaient également étudié dans cette ville,—que Barnstaple était gouvernée par Joel de Totness, dont la femme était la sœur de Guermond de Péquigny : qui saura décider si ce sont là des éléments originaux du récit ou des additions d'Herman ? Quand, dans un passage particulièrement intéressant, à propos de la rixe provoquée entre l'infirmes de Bodmin et le gardien des reliques par la question du retour d'Arthur, on trouvera cette remarque que Bretons et Français se querellaient fréquemment à ce sujet, comment reconnaîtra-t-on si l'on a affaire à un trait ancien ou à une observation personnelle d'Herman ? Et qui

assurera que le zèle d'Herman ne se soit pas étendu jusqu'à inventer la matière même de certains miracles?

Du fait qu'il se trouve rapporté par Herman, le récit des chanoines de Laon ne peut donc pas être considéré comme valable pour l'année 1113. Il ne peut pas l'être, puis qu'on tient la preuve qu'Herman ne l'a certainement pas reproduit en sa teneur originale. Dans quelle mesure Herman l'a-t-il interpolé? Les faits dont il a parlé ne pourront être tenus pour acquis qu'à la date où lui-même a écrit. Or cette date était, pour le moins postérieure à 1135: son texte en fournit la preuve. Mais elle a pu être sensiblement plus tardive encore, peut-être d'une dizaine d'années et même davantage, puisque le dedicataire de l'ouvrage, l'évêque Barthélemy de Laon, est resté titulaire de son siège jusqu'en 1151.

Si donc quelque jour l'on a montré à Bodmin une chaire et un four d'Arthur, si quelque jour les Bretons ont cru au retour futur d'Arthur, si quelque jour ils ont prétendu que la Domnonée avait été la terre d'Arthur, il est interdit de s'appuyer sur le texte d'Herman de Tournai pour affirmer que ces traditions avaient déjà cours en 1113.

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Mesdames, Messieurs, trop souvent, à propos des traditions arthuriennes, les historiens ont échafaudé des théories avant d'avoir suffisamment éprouvé la solidité des bases sur lesquelles ils les élevaient. Le moment est peut-être venu où, par réaction contre un état d'esprit trop aventureux, il conviendrait de procéder à un examen sévère des textes et documents que nous a livrés le passé en ce qui concerne Arthur et son groupe. Votre jeune et brillante société, en s'inspirant d'une méthode rigoureuse et en s'attachant à n'obtenir que des résultats absolument certains, peut rendre, dans une portion importante du domaine littéraire médiéval, des services considérables. La crainte de votre jugement, les exigences de votre curiosité, la difficulté de vous satisfaire imposeront peut-être aux historiens une prudence utile et salutaire. Vous ferez régner l'ordre dans le désordre; vous établirez cette conviction que la recherche de

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la vérité est supérieure aux jeux de la frivolité ; vous rendrez à l'histoire des droits usurpés par la littérature, par une mauvaise littérature ; et, guidés par votre Président, vous aurez ainsi bien mérité de la science.

Sir Thomas Malory and the 'Piteous History of the Morte of King Arthur'

(Read before the Society on February 9th, 1928.)

IN this paper I propose to consider Malory's version of the final overthrow of the knights of the Round Table and the death of King Arthur, contained in Books XVIII, XX and XXI of his 'Morte d'Arthur'—Book XIX, belonging originally to an earlier part of the Prose Cycle, has no necessary connection with these three.

Malory was primarily a translator who wished to present, within a reasonable compass and with some semblance of unity, the mass of Arthurian Legend with which he was acquainted. We should then ask, first of all, upon what originals he worked.

We turn naturally to those versions of the story which show the closest resemblance to the work of Malory, and we find there are two, the Middle English metrical poem, 'Le Morte Arthur,' and the portion of the French Prose Arthurian Cycle known as 'Mort Artu.'

Is it possible that either of these texts could have been the direct source of Malory's books XVIII, XX, XXI?

Could Malory have worked solely on any of the extant versions of the 'Mort Artu'? These versions and Malory present a general agreement, but in Malory we find some important variations. We cannot, however, suppose that Malory invented these, as they are almost all found in the English poem, where we find, too, many omissions, explained by the author's purpose of telling the story as briefly as he could. This very purpose makes it unlikely that he should have invented fresh incidents, and we therefore suppose them to have been in his source.

There is, indeed, in Malory and 'Le Morte Arthur' an almost identical sequence of incident, and in certain parts a striking similarity of phrasing. But there are still too many differences

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between the texts, differences which cannot be explained by the purpose of either writer, to permit us to suppose a common source for them both, and while some of the differences in Malory are found in extant French versions, others are not. It seems probable that the two writers used versions—lost versions, perhaps—of the 'Morte Arthur' which were identical in certain parts. This would explain similarities of phrasing that could hardly be accidental.

It is impossible for us to reconstruct Malory's source. A comparison, however, between his version and both the 'Mort Artu,' as we know it, and 'Le Morte Arthur,' reveals certain interesting changes. These may be attributed, in part, to his source, but also in part, to his general purpose.

It is with some of the latter, and the conclusions that may be drawn from them, that I am concerned here.

In relating any story there are certain limitations. Should the plot be already well known it has a life of its own which protests against mutilation. A loosely woven plot may undergo alterations or additions without harm, but a dramatic sequence of events can hardly support alterations without a complete change of character. Many of the sources used by Malory would admit of extensive alterations and still preserve their original character, but our part of the story, the tragic end of chivalry designed as a dramatically satisfying end to a long cycle has a closer sequence of events, and a definite unity. Malory, as we should expect, preserves the general outline of the story and all the important incidents used in working it out. He has not even added fresh episodes.

We must, then, look for his contribution to the story in his treatment of the incidents furnished him by his source.

Malory does make a definite attempt to elucidate the action, and to give what he considers convincing reasons for incidents which previously had no adequate causes. He adds an interesting motive for the surprising consent given by Gareth and Gaheris to watch the burning of the Queen. Gawain explains: 'They will be loath to be there present, but they are full young, and full unable to say you nay.'

Malory prefers the more rational or even the more prosaic explanation of an incident. For example, he attributes the reopening of Lancelot's wound, not to his great distress at being unable to attend the tournament at Thanebourg, but to the exercising of his horse, attempted too soon.

In one place, on the other hand, it is interesting to note that Malory seems to have been unable to find a reasonable solution. When Lancelot has defended the Queen against Mador's accusation of poisoning his brother, the 'Mort Artu' accepts Lancelot's victory as a satisfactory conclusion to the affair. 'Le Morte Arthur' says that the squires who served in the hall were tortured until one of them revealed the identity of the real criminal. Malory accepts neither of these explanations, rejecting the one perhaps as inconclusive, the other as barbarous. Nevertheless, the visit of the Lady of the Lake who has discovered the truth by means of her supernatural powers, which is his version, is no more a rational explanation than either of the others.

There are additions which can only be explained by Malory's own tastes and opinions. Of such are the lists of names in which he delights, as when he enumerates those upon whom Lancelot bestowed lands and titles, or the combatants in tournaments. More interesting than these, especially to us, is the occasional introduction of his own reflections. We have an example of this in a chapter on love:—

'Right so fareth love nowadays, soon hot, soon cold; this is no stability. But the old love was not so; men and women could love together seven years, and no lycours lusts were between them, and there was love, truth and faithfulness; and lo in like wise was used love in King Arthur's days'; or again in his estimate of the English when he refers to the desertion of King Arthur by many barons: 'Now might not these Englishmen hold them content. Lo thus was the old custom and usage of this land. Alas this is a great default of us Englishmen, for there may no thing please us no term . . . and the most part of all England held with Sir Mordred, the people were so new fangle.'

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These additions are all interesting, but Malory's most significant contribution to the story is the identification of towns.

The hermitage where Lancelot repairs, when forbidden the court, is situated 'beside Windsor.'

What was but a meadow before is now 'a meadow beside Westminster,' 'Astolat that is now in English called Gilford,' or 'And then they rode so long till that they came to Camelot, that time called Winchester'—regardless of the fact that in the French versions they are separate towns.

We may even be told the distances, 'from Glastonbury to Amesbury, the which is little more than thirty mile.' Malory also attempts to locate places over the sea. 'And so they shipped to Cardiff and sailed into Benwick; some men call it Bayonne, and some men call it Beaune, where the wine of Beaune is.'

It would seem, then, that Malory had made for himself a moderately clear plan of the geography of the legends he related. Not that this would be entirely due to him, as the legends were partially localised before his time. The connection of Arthur with Glastonbury had been accepted before 1100, and it is probable that other connections, such as 'Arthur's Seat,' date from the same period or even earlier. But this localisation does make the story more vivid, and creates the atmosphere of history rather than legend. This, too, may have been part of Malory's purpose, to make the legends of King Arthur a national epic.

We have seen that Malory accepts the incidents furnished to him by his source, and we find that he has accepted the characters, though it seems that he was less interested in their personality than in their actions. This is true especially of some of the lesser people. Sir Bors has lost his individuality, he exists solely as the faithful friend of Lancelot, who himself gives us an adequate summary of all that is left of Bors when he says: 'I thank you, for ever ye will my worship.'

The characters, too, of the two traitors, Agravaïne and Mordred, are softened. We no longer find the references to the

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ancient hatred of Agravaine for Lancelot, or the details about Mordred's character.

None of these details are essential to the story, and perhaps Malory considered them superfluous. It is, however, just possible that he has used the opposite method with Gareth, and has furnished us with new details about him and his love for Lancelot, 'he loved Sir Lancelot above all men earthly.' But Book VII, which relates the early history of Gareth, has no known source, and it may be that the source of that book contained details of the later deeds of Gareth upon which Malory drew for these additions.

Malory shows more interest in the psychology of his four main characters, and it is reasonable to suppose a definite intention in his treatment of them though he cannot make extensive changes, as their characters are to a great extent determined by the actions allotted to them.

Malory cannot omit the jealousies of the Queen, or the caprices which are necessary to secure the requisite absences of Lancelot from court; but he can enlarge upon her repentances, though he does not show her labouring under any sense of sin. There is a trace of the earlier conception of the Queen as a sinner, causing the ruin of many, in the Knights' statement: 'We love her not, by cause she is a destroyer of good knights.'

At the end of her life, although we have a detailed account of her renunciation of Lancelot, Malory weakens it by giving her last thoughts on earth to her lover: 'I beseech Almighty God that I may never have power to see Sir Lancelot with my worldly eye,' words which indicate a fear that her love is still too strong.

Similarly Malory has attempted to stress King Arthur's nobler qualities. He must allow his wife to be sentenced to death if she cannot prove that she is innocent of the death of Mador's brother, but we may be told of his reluctance: 'I must be a rightful judge, and that repenteth me that I may not do battle for my wife.' Not that Malory makes him a perfect husband, for although he no longer says that in Lancelot's place he would have consoled Elaine, he does say later: 'Much more am I

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sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair Queen, for queens I might have enow.'

Sometimes this attempt to make the King nobler has a contrary effect. During the war against Lancelot, Arthur must fight, and either he must long for peace and be too weak to resist Gawain, or he must be eager to crush Lancelot, and be ungrateful for all Lancelot's services. Malory prefers the former attitude, and makes the King almost ludicrous with his frequent and unavailing desires for reconciliation.

We cannot, however, deny that Malory has made King Arthur the central figure in the cycle, though not the hero; and has embodied the conception of him as the king who may return one day to help his kingdom.

'Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesus into another place; and men say that he shall come again and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say that it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life.'

Malory has also tried to improve upon the character of Gawain, already much more attractive than that of his uncle. He rejects, as do the other English writers, the conception of Gawain as a sinner who was punished during the Quest, and who during the rest of his life is reproved periodically for his pride. Malory's Gawain is unconquerable except for Lancelot. He never really believes that Lancelot has shamed the King. 'Though it were so that Sir Lancelot were found in the Queen's chamber, yet it might be so that he came thither for none evil.'

Malory does his best to explain Gawain's sudden change towards Lancelot, by dwelling on the love of Gawain for Gareth, and his grief that Lancelot has slain him. Finally, too, he gives us a detailed account of his repentance. "'Wit you well my death day is come and all is through mine own hastiness and sinfulness.'" And then Sir Gawain prayed the King to send for Sir Lancelot and to cherish him above all other knights.

But even Gawain, great though he is, cannot be the hero of the whole cycle, for this is the right of Sir Lancelot du Lac.

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For Malory, Lancelot is the perfect lover who never forgot his lady during the Quest, who would not, even after the Quest, love her so openly as to cause scandal, and whose love could only be discovered by the spying of Agravaine. But in spite of this there is a trace of the earlier idea of his sin. 'Ever when I faintest would have worship there befallst me ever some unhappy thing.'

Malory's attempt to soften the effect of Lancelot's treachery is surprising, consisting as it does in several declarations by Lancelot of the Queen's innocence. 'My lady is a true lady to your person.' This might have been in his source, but it is not convincing. There is, too, still a suggestion that the Queen, even at her death, loved Lancelot, and his religious motives are influenced by his love for her. 'And, therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection I must needs take me to perfection of right.' Finally it is as a lover, not as a hermit, that he lies grovelling on the Queen's tomb, however much he may assert that his grief is not sinful.

Malory thought of Lancelot as he makes Hector describe him: 'Ah, Lancelot, thou were head of all Christian knights, and thou were the courteoust knight that ever bare shield. And thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrad horse. And thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman.'

We cannot say that Malory has greatly altered these characters, but he has removed whatever traces remained in his source of the conception of them as sinners, to be punished because they could not achieve the Grail, and he has attempted to throw their nobler qualities into a stronger relief. He wished to make them even in their downfall worthy of respect, but the achievement was beyond him, because of the story upon which he had to work.

MARJORIE B. FOX.

Dante and the Arthurian Legend

(Read before the Society on May 17th, 1928.)

THERE is a famous sentence in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* where Dante, examining the claims to preference of the three chief romance languages (as we should now call them), admits in support of French its pre-eminence in vernacular prose, and makes express mention of the Arthurian stories: 'Arturi regis ambages pulcerrimae.'¹

In his love lyrics Dante never makes use of allusions to names in the Arthurian cycle, in the fashion which the poets of the 'scuola siciliana' and their immediate Tuscan successors had made traditional for mere decoration, and which had already been abandoned by Guido Guinicelli and Guido Cavalcanti; but there are motives in the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Rime* that inevitably suggest an Arthurian origin. Whatever may have been its immediate source, the dream which is the subject of the first sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*, the dream in which Love makes Beatrice eat of her lover's heart, harks back to the famous lines in the *Tristan* of Thomas, where Iseult sings of how the Count gave the heart of Guirun to his wife to eat.² Again, in one of his earliest sonnets, 'Guido, i'vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io,' Dante invokes for Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni, and himself a romantic voyage over fairy seas in an enchanted boat, and that 'il buono incantatore' should put with them their three ladies. Here the motive comes from the prose *Tristan*. The boat is 'la nef de jois' that Merlin made for the daughter of the king of Northumberland, and which conveyed Tristan and Iseult in their last escape from Cornwall, the 'buono incantatore' being none other than Mer-

¹ V.E., I, 10.

² V.N., §iii; *Le roman de Tristan par Thomas*, ed. Bédier, I, p. 295, vv. 833-842. Cf. E. Levi, *I lais bretoni e la leggenda di Tristano* (Perugia, 1918).

lin himself.³ We find in the *Vita Nuova* a curious echo—or rather, series of echoes—of an episode in an Arthurian poem, the *Cligés* of Chrétien de Troyes. The two sonnets, ‘Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore’ and ‘Morte villana, di pietà nemica,’ in which Dante bewails the death of a girl whom he had seen in Beatrice’s company, and the episode, later on in the book, where the pilgrims pass through Florence after the death of Beatrice herself, have an extraordinary resemblance to the place in Chrétien’s poem where the crowds weep for the supposed death of the Empress and, in the midst of their mourning, the physicians from Salerno come to the city.⁴ In a later lyric of Dante’s, the well-known sestina (‘Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra’), one of the ‘rime per la donna pietra,’ I suspect a possible Arthurian motive:—

‘Ma ben ritorneranno i fiumi a’colli,
prima che questo legno molle e verde
s’inflammi, come suol far bella donna,
di me; che mi torrei dormire in pietra
tutto il mio tempo e gir pascendo l’erba,
sol per veder do’suoi panni fanno ombra.”

Tentatively, I take these last lines to mean that, only to see the shadow of his lady’s dress, the poet would face the fate of Merlin, who, through doting upon the Lady of the Lake, was entombed alive in the rock, and that of Tristan, who, when believing himself supplanted by Kahedyn in Iseult’s favour, in his madness fed upon grass.

Dante nowhere mentions Merlin by name, and, when we remember the way the Arthurian sage obsesses the prophetic political literature of the thirteenth century in Italy, this silence may be significant. Salimbene in his *Chronicle* had linked

³ *Rime*, ed. Barbi, lii; *Oxford Dante*, ed. Toynbee, xxxii. Cf. Rajna, *Dante e i romanzi della Tavola Rotonda*, in *Nuova Antologia* (June 1, 1920), pp. 242-243.

⁴ *V.N.*, §§ viii, xl (xli); *Cligés*, vv. 57, p. 9 ff. Cf. W. W. Comfort in *Romanic Review*, II, pp. 209-210.

⁵ *Rime*, ed. Barbi, ci; *Oxford Dante*, ed. Toynbee, Sest. I.

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the 'angelicus vates' with the Sibyl and the abbot Joachim of Flora. Now the Sibyl was sacred for Dante, and Joachim is accepted in Paradise as 'di spirito profetico dotato.'⁶ But Salimbene further associates Merlin with two of his own contemporaries: Michael Scott and the cobbler of Parma, Asdente. Dante condemns both Michael Scott and Asdente together to the bolgia of the diviners and soothsayers, but Merlin is not with them; their only companion, apart from their prototypes in classical antiquity, is Guido Bonatti, the Ghibelline astrologer from Forlì of their own day.⁷ There are several passages in his works that show that Dante had a contempt and loathing for the mediaeval supposed prophet in whose image and likeness the Joachists and their allies had created a false, unromantic Merlin. We know how Dante has delivered Virgil from the mediaeval degradation that represented him as a magician. Similarly, though in an immeasurably lesser sphere, his silence in the *Inferno* at least preserved Merlin from the current travesty. Perhaps the poet realised that Merlin in the Arthuriad was in the main a force for righteousness; at least, in the one explicit reference to him that we find in Dante's works, he remains the purely romantic figure of 'il buono incantatore.'

There can be no question that Dante knew his 'ambages pulcerrimae' at first hand in the French romances, and the place where their influence upon him is most marked is naturally the fifth canto of the *Inferno*. Here the atmosphere of the *Tristan* and the *Lancelot* is harmoniously combined with the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. The enumeration of the lovers in antiquity or romance on Virgil's lips recalls the 'Lugentes Campi' of his own poem, where Aeneas sees the victims of love; but, at the same time, it suggests a passage in the *Mort Artu* where Bohort (Bors) gives Guenevere a list of the famous men who have been undone by love or through women.⁸

⁶ *Par.* xxxiii, 66, xii, 140.

⁷ *Inf.* xx, 115-120.

⁸ *Inf.*, v. 52-67; *Aen.* vi, 445-451; *Mort Artu*, ed. Bruce, p. 58.

As in the French romance, so in the *Inferno*, the list ends with the names of Paris and Tristan; the verse pausing on the latter as though it gave the key to the rest of the canto: 'Vedi Paris, Tristano.' The typical lover of the Arthuriad is nowhere else mentioned by Dante, nor does the name of Iseult occur in his works; the convention that dragged in their names as an empty allusion in a love poem had been abandoned by the poets of the 'dolce stil nuovo,' and—unlike his contemporaries in Italy, but resembling in this what was to be the attitude of Malory—Lancelot is for Dante the more significant figure. It may be observed that the poetical version of the death of the two lovers given by Thomas, with the episode of the black and white sails, seems to have been unknown in Italy, and Dante would unquestionably have thought of the end of the story as told in the *Tristan* (and invariably followed in Italian texts, prose and verse alike): Tristan is with the Queen in her chamber, they are harping and singing, when Mark through the window stabs his nephew with the poisoned lance that Morgan le Fay had given him, and the lovers ultimately die in each other's arms. In the lines that follow, an echo of Vergil's verse of the spirits in the Mourning Fields ('Hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit' becoming 'ch'amor di nostra vita dipartille') is at once absorbed into the atmosphere of mediaeval romance:—

'Poscia ch'io ebbi il mio dottore udito
nomar le donne antiche e'cavalieri
pietà mi giunse; e fui quasi smarrito.'

It was Torraca who first pointed out that the romance of *Tristan* no less than that of *Lancelot* is woven into the story of Paolo and Francesca, which is practically an adaptation of the former to a contemporary Italian tragedy.*

There is no trace of any previous legend or tradition concerning Francesca da Polenta, her relations with Paolo, and their fate. A few isolated documents incidentally naming the three chief actors in the drama are all that we find before the

* Il canto v dell'*Inferno* in his *Studi danteschi* (Naples, 1912).

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poem, and these documents merely enable us to infer that Gianciotto and Paolo Malatesta were brothers, that the former had a wife named Francesca, and that, after a certain year, Paolo disappears from view, while, by another year, Gianciotto has another wife. That Francesca and Paolo were lovers, and met their deaths at Gianciotto's hand is merely deduced from Dante's lines (I do not, of course, question the historicity of the fact), and the early commentators, in the details they supply, are for the most part merely elaborating what they read in the *Commedia*.

'Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende
prese costui de la bella persona
che mi fu tolta; e'l modo ancor m'offende.
Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.
Amor condusse noi ad una morte :
Caino attende chi a vita ci spense.'¹⁰

Dante gives us no details of their death. 'Caino attende chi a vita ci spense.' The allusion to Cain, the first murderer and fratricide awaiting his mediaeval imitator (or, if you prefer the reading 'Caina,' the region of ice where the treacherous slayers of their kindred are embedded), is the only indication of the identity of the avenger. But this love that led to one same death, and is unquenched even in the infernal tempest, how did it begin? 'A che e come concedette amore che conosceste i dubbiosi desiri?' Inevitably the secret lay buried in the grave with the two lovers. To interpret it, in the answer placed upon Francesca's lips Dante had recourse to the greatest love story of the Middle Ages :—

'Noi leggevamo un giorno per diletto
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse :
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.

¹⁰ I feel convinced that 'Caino' (as in the *Oxford Dante*), rather than 'Caina' (adopted by Vandelli in the *testo critico della Società Dantesca Italiana*, which I otherwise follow), is the preferable reading of the last line (*Inf.* v, 107).

Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse
 quella letura, e scolorocci il viso;
 ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.
 Quando leggemmo il disiato riso
 esser baciato da cotanto amante,
 questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,
 la bocca mi baciò tutto tremante.
 Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse:
 quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.'

'Soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.' This line, condensing a sentence from the prose *Tristan*, gives the clue to the genesis of the episode. A comparison with either the French text or the *Tristano Riccardiano*¹¹ makes it clear that the scene is modelled upon that in the Tristan romance where Tristan and Iseult drink the magic potion, the 'beveraggio amoroso.' We may surmise that the bare report that Paolo and Francesca had died together at the hands of Gianciotto, brother slaying brother, brought back to Dante's mind the slaying of Tristan by Mark, nephew by uncle, with the death of Iseult, together with her lover, and that he turned to the romance from the beginning of the story, the scene upon the ship that is bringing Tristan and Iseult from Ireland to Cornwall, substituting the reading of the *Lancelot* by Paolo and Francesca for the drinking of the magic potion by their prototypes. Nor, perhaps, is it without significance that, in some texts of the French *Tristan*, when Andret denounces the lovers to Mark, Tristan and Iseult are talking together of Lancelot and Guenevere.¹²

In the *Tavola Ritonda*, which (in the form in which it has come down to us) is slightly later than the *Commedia*, the resemblance between the scene on the ship and the scene at Rimini is very close indeed, even the phraseology being at times almost identical. Further, at the end of the story, when

¹¹ The *Tristano Riccardiano*, edited by Parodi, is the earliest Arthurian romance in Italian prose, and dates from the latter part of the thirteenth century.

¹² Löseth, *Le roman en prose de Tristan*, § 45.

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Mark receives Tristan's dying message and repents of what he has done, the king's bearing is described in words almost exactly those of Dante himself when he hears the fate of Paolo and Francesca.¹³ Unless we suppose that an unidentified redaction of the *Tristan* was among the sources of both Dante and the Italian romance, we must assume that the writer of the *Tavola Ritonda* had read the Francesca episode, recognised its affinity with the Tristan and Iseult story, and accordingly echoed it in the version he proceeded to give.

More remarkable is Boccaccio's handling of the matter in his commentary on the *Inferno*. Here he elaborates the tragedy of Paolo and Francesca, telling us—in a novella quite in the spirit of the *Decameron*, but accepted as sober history by later commentators in his steps—how Paolo went to Ravenna to woo Francesca by proxy for his brother, and, lest she should be repelled by the grim personality of Gianciotto, her father had Paolo pointed out to her as her future husband, the deception not being laid aside until the wedding night when Gianciotto was substituted for Paolo. Torraca has shown that Boccaccio is simply adapting the story of Tristan and Iseult: Tristan's wooing Iseult by proxy for King Mark, and her father trying to induce him to plead for himself (in the *Tavola Ritonda*, Iseult is at first allowed to suppose that Tristan is her destined husband), the substitution of Brangain for Iseult on Mark's wedding night. Other details may similarly be matched; for instance, the catastrophe being brought about by the servant who sends word to Gianciotto is paralleled by the betrayal of the lovers to King Mark by Andret. If this is so (and Boccaccio knew both the Tristan and Lancelot stories at first hand in the 'romanzi franceschi' of which he speaks), we must suppose that his critical instinct led him to recognise the thoroughly Arthurian character of the canto, and the connection of its conclusion with the Tristan romance, and, to complete it, he turned back to Dante's original source and carried the correspondence considerably farther.

¹³ Cf. *Tavola Ritonda*, ed. Polidori, 119-122, 498.

'Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse.' We know that one of the parts or branches into which the *Lancelot* was divided, the portion containing the episode that Paolo and Francesca read together, bore the title of 'Galehaut.' But Dante probably means that the book and its author played the same part with the lovers of Rimini as Galehot, the 'haut prince,' did with Lancelot and Guenevere in making them known to each other, prompting the revelation of their mutual love, and inducing the Queen to kiss the knight. It will, of course, be observed that, with Dante, it is Lancelot who kisses the Queen: 'Quando leggemmo il disiato riso esser baciato da cotante amante'—the 'cotanto amante' recalling Galehot's introduction of his friend: 'Dame, uez ci le meillor cheualier del monde.' It has sometimes been thought that Dante deviated slightly from his source in order to make Paolo rather than Francesca take the initiative; but Parodi well notes how Francesca is the dominant spirit throughout the episode, reducing Paolo 'quasi ad un'ombra della sua prepotente passione.'¹⁴

Now to the true Arthurian this line as usually, and I believe rightly, understood, is almost as great a stumbling-block as Dante's treatment of Brutus and Cassius was to some of the humanists of the early Renaissance. Galehot, 'the haut prince,' 'the lord of the far-off isles,' who invades Arthur's kingdom, but renounces his dreams of dominion and becomes one of his rival's knights for love of Lancelot, is among the noblest figures of mediaeval romance. As M. Ferdinand Lot has pointed out, the story of his relations with Lancelot is the great mediaeval example of perfect friendship between man and man, like the classical myth of Orestes and Pylades or the scriptural tale of David and Jonathan.¹⁵ Content with the love of Lancelot, he watches unmoved the crumbling away of the great castle of the 'orgueilleuse emprise,' in which he had thought to imprison Arthur and himself be crowned, sur-

¹⁴ *Poesia e storia nella 'Divina Commedia'* (Naples, 1921), p. 69. See generally, P. Toynbee, *Dante and the Lancelot Romance*, in his *Dante Wudris e Nescardus* (London, 1902).

¹⁵ *Etude sur le Lancelot en prose*, pp. 65-66.

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rounded with conquered kings, and he ultimately dies of grief in the erroneous belief that his friend has killed himself. The figure of Galehot has lost much of its significance in Malory, and the plot attributed to him in Book X of the *Morte d'Arthur* is utterly inconsistent with his original character. The arguments of Michele Barbi and others, that the moral type of Galeotto with Dante is not that of a 'turpe mezzano,' but of a 'cavalleresco messo d'amore,'¹⁶ seem to me to make this line utterly colourless. On Francesca's lips, like the preceding line about her slayer ('Caino attende chi a vita ci spense'), the line has surely the force of a bitter imprecation: 'Galeotto fu il libro e chi lo scrisse.' The book and its author had wrought their spiritual downfall even as Gianciotto had quenched their earthly life. Dante unquestionably knew the *Lancelot* at first hand; but, while accepting real or supposed facts that he found in his sources, he maintained considerable freedom in the moral judgment that he passed upon them—as we see strikingly exemplified when his treatment of Brutus and Cassius is contrasted with their characters so portrayed by Lucan. Dante knew the character of Galehot in the romance; but, in this particular action of his, he has deliberately branded his name as that of a pander. When Boccaccio called his *Decameron* by the sub-title, 'Prencipe Galeotto,' he had in mind—as the prefix 'prencipe' shows—not Dante, but the original French romance.

There is another, somewhat perplexing, reference to the same episode of the *Lancelot*, in the *Paradiso*, where Dante, after learning the knightly dignity that his ancestor Cacciaguida had held in the world, addresses him with the ceremonious 'voi':—

'Onde Beatrice, ch'era un poco scevra,
ridendo, parve quella che tossio
al primo fallo scritto di Ginevra.'¹⁷

¹⁶ Cf. M. Barbi, in *Studi di Filologia Italiana* (Florence, 1927), I, p. 53.

¹⁷ *Par.* xvi, 13-15.

Here Dante is not alluding to the kiss, but to where, previously, the Queen compels Lancelot to reveal his love; upon which the Lady of Malehaut 'coughed all openly and raised her head which she had before bent down.'¹⁸ To me, I confess, this image of the Lady of Malehaut and her cough, applied to Beatrice and her smile, is one of the few places in the *Paradiso* where Dante is less than himself. The only plausible explanation seems that of Rajna.¹⁹ The cough of the Lady of Malehaut was intended to reveal her identity to Lancelot, to warn him that she is there and watching, and that she has now understood his secret. The smile, or laugh, of Beatrice is to remind Dante of her presence, to warn him that she has perceived the trace of vainglory in his noble ancestry, that 'poca nostra nobiltà di sangue,' manifested in his use of the plural 'voi' to Cacciaguida.

There is a passage in the *Purgatorio* which seems to me to have an unmistakable Arthurian ring. It is where Guido del Duca weeps when he remembers the chivalrous life of Romagna in the past, and compares it with the present degeneration:—

'Le donne e i cavalier, li affanni e li agi,
che ne 'nvogliava amore e cortesia
là dove i cuor son fatti sì malvagi.'²⁰

It is a lamentation for the corruption of the chivalrous ideal in a small region of thirteenth century Italy, but one that might have been uttered by one of Arthur's own knights in the approaching dissolution of the Round Table in the *Mort Artu*.

Two of the final episodes of the *Mort Artu* are recorded by Dante. Among the souls most worthy to be embedded in the ice of Caina, in the lowest circle of the *Inferno*, is Mordred:—

'Quelli a cui fu rotto il petto e l'ombra
con esso un colpo per la man d'Artù';²¹

¹⁸ See Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁹ Dante e i romanzi della Tavola Rotonda, *loc. cit.*, pp. 232-234.

²⁰ *Purg.* xiv, 109-111.

²¹ *Inf.* xxxii, 61-62.

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the allusion being to the passing of a ray of sun through his body when Arthur's lance was withdrawn, as a token of the wrath of God. In the *Convivio*, where Dante speaks of the return of the noble soul to God in the fourth period of life, Lancelot—'lo cavaliere Lancelotto'—is cited as one of those who would not enter the harbour with hoisted sails, but 'lowered the sails of worldly activities, for, in their advanced age, they dedicated themselves to religion, putting aside every mundane delight and work.'²²

Had the Quest of the Holy Graal any influence upon the poet? There are traditions that place the Graal Castle on an island in the sea. The 'City of Sarras, the spiritual place,' is reached by Galahad and his companions in a mystical ship in the *Queste*; in the *Perlesvaus*, Perceval passes away to the region which will ultimately be the place of the Holy Graal in a ship 'with the white sail and the red cross thereon, and within were the fairest folk that ever he might behold.' Here is at least some resemblance with Dante's island mountain of Purgatory, rising out of the sea and crowned by the Earthly Paradise, and the ship guided by the white robed and white winged Angel which bears the happy band of redeemed souls. The legend of the Holy Graal was unquestionably associated with the Earthly Paradise, and it has been urged—notably by Rajna—that 'la divina foresta spessa o viva,' to which Dante comes at the end of the *Purgatorio*, with its mystical river, is reminiscent of the scenery round the Graal Castle in the *Perlesvaus*, and that the pageantry that Dante beholds should be associated with the procession of the Graal.²³ Personally, I am still very doubtful as to any direct influence of the legend of the Holy Graal in the *Divina Commedia*. The mysticism of Dante has, I feel, a totally different colour. But we may regard the vision of the *Commedia* in its fulfilment as an achieving of the Holy Graal in another field, and, when we re-

²² *Conv.* iv, 28.

²³ Rajna, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-246. Cf. L. A. Fisher, *The Mystic Vision in the Grail Legend and in the Divine Comedy* (Columbia University Press, 1917).

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member the unique place in literature held by the sacred poem, may repeat the words of Malory : ' Sithen was there never man so hard to say that he had seen the Sangreal.'

EDMUND G. GARDNER.

The Mystical Doctrine of the *Queste del Saint Graal*

(Read before the Society on March 8th, 1928.)

WHILE it seems certain that the author of the *Queste del Saint Graal* wrote with a religious purpose, it is not easy to define that purpose exactly. The reality of the difficulty is only made the more apparent by the disagreement between M. Pauphilet¹ and M. Gilson² on a capital point. Nothing would at first sight appear more contradictory than the two following statements: 'Ce n'est pas le problème théologique de la grâce qui préoccupait l'auteur de la *queste*, ni l'éternel débat du libre arbitre humain et de l'omnipotence divine (Pauphilet *loc. cit.*) and, 'ce problème le préoccupe, au contraire, sans cesse et il prend constamment position par rapport à lui' (Gilson *loc. cit.*). In attempting a solution of the difficulty we must go over the ground in which the above disagreement, expressed in a different use of the word 'problem,' has its root.

This involves an examination both of the opinion that the doctrine of the *Queste* is Cistercian, and of the manner of presentation of that doctrine. In point of fact, the two things can be treated as one. If, bearing in mind the opinions of Pauphilet and Gilson, we make a brief examination of the conversion of Lancelot, 'le personnage le plus vivant de la *Queste*,'³ this may help us to decide the nature of the doctrine taught, and the purpose of the writer, and so perhaps allow us

¹ Pauphilet: *Etudes sur la queste del S. Graal*, p. 31.

² Gilson. *Romania*, Vol. li, p. 321, *et sqq.*

³ *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Ed. A. Pauphilet. Introduction, p. xi.

to restate the opinions of Pauphilet and Gilson in a way that will remove the misunderstanding.⁴

In comparing S. Bernard's writings with the *Queste* it is not sufficient to discover merely verbal similarities, however striking. Personal and not universal points of doctrine form the only real test, for in most theological writings the phraseology is largely borrowed from a common source—the Scriptures. Indeed, an example of how misleading verbal likeness may be would not be out of place here. Nothing could be more striking, for example, than the following similarity, one only of many such that might be given:—

Chest sa douce meire la
glorieuse viergene dont il
nasqui contre acostumance
de nature. Chele dame est
a droit apelee flors. Car
nulle femme ne porta on-
ques enfant devant lui ne
apres que par carnel assem-
blament ne fust anchois
desflorée . . .

Maria flos fere secundum
omnes proprietates flori
suo qui est Christus supe-
rius assignatus . . . quia
nihil inquinatum incurrit in
illum florem . . .

Chele flore est flore de-
seure toutes les autres flors,
de chele flor nasqui li fruis
par qui tout gent sont sous-
tenu. Chest li fruis dont li
cors est sostenus et lame
paie.⁵

Maria dicitur flos fru-
menti quoad fructum mater-
nitatis suae: flos enim fru-
menti generat granum fru-
menti. Et ipsa genuit illud
granum . . . quo videlicet
grano pascimur in Filii sac-
ramento.⁶

In these two passages there is a striking similarity of words and ideas, but this cannot justify us in seeing any further or deliberate connection between the 'Livre de Lancelot du Lac' and the writings of Albert the Great. In contrast to this we

⁴ M. Pauphilet has already made a thorough investigation of the doctrine in the *Queste*, but the present brief examination is made from a slightly different angle.

⁵ *Lancelot—Graal*. Sommer, Vol. iii, p. 119, *et passim*.

⁶ *Albertus Magnus*. De Laudibus B.M.V., xii, 4.

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give an example of resemblance based on what appears to be a similarity of doctrine, one that might justifiably lead us to see some deliberate connection :—

Nule rien ne vous puet
rescoure de perdre toute
honor terrienne si il ne vous
resquent li lyons iauages
et li mires sans medecine
*par le conseil de la flor.*⁷

Ne au lion verai . . . ne
pues tu ataindre san *le con-
seil de la flor.*⁸

Et se iamais venra au
desus de ceste dolor ou tu
es, che sera *par le conseil
de la flore.*⁹

O notre souveraine ! O
notre médiatrice ! O notre
Avocate ! réconciliez-nous
avec votre fils, recomman-
dez-nous à votre fils.¹⁰

Opus est enim mediatore
ad mediatorem istum ; nec
alter nobis utilior quam
Maria.¹¹

It is clear that in these passages there is a doctrinal and not merely a verbal similarity.¹² Both writers refer to the doctrine of the ' Mediatorship of the Blessed Virgin,' of which S. Bernard has always been considered one of the earliest advocates.

Since, therefore, the nature of the subject, treating as it does of matters drawn largely from Scripture, allows us to place little confidence on similarities of word and image, in following Lancelot's conversion we have excluded many such resemblances between the *Queste* and S. Bernard's writings, and directed our attention to points of

⁷ *Lancelot—Graal*. Sommer. Vol. iii, p. 110, *et passim*.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ S. Bernard Sermons. In Adventu, sermo II, 5.

¹¹ S. Bernard Sermons. Dom. infra. Oct. Assump.

¹² I have deliberately chosen these examples from elsewhere in the *Lancelot—Graal* in the hope that, besides serving their purpose here, they may also help towards a solution of the problem of the unity of spirit in that cycle.

doctrine, and more especially to those dealing with the rôle of Grace.

The story fittingly opens upon the Vigil of Pentecost, for the Holy Spirit is to inspire the actions of most of those engaged upon the *Queste*. From the outset we are introduced to happenings that have every appearance of a supernatural character. The story, too, begins with a parting that may have some significance, for Lancelot is called away from Guinevere to the place where Galaad is, and the Queen is uneasy at his going.

Galaad arrives at court, and the Holy Grail appears to the assembly. As we read the description of this apparition we seem to be with the Apostles at the first Pentecost. The Holy Ghost has appeared in a visible form, though under a new symbol. Lancelot little realises the change that is about to come in his life, even to the loss of his supremacy as a knight. When next he beholds the Grail, it will not be as the worldly lover of a queen, but as an ascetic and, in a measure, as a mystic.

If Lancelot is to become perfect he must learn that earthly prowess will fail, where more righteous men enjoy the divine assistance. He is bluntly, almost brutally, robbed of the notion of his supremacy by the words of a maiden upon a white palfrey. She tells Lancelot how things have changed for him since the previous day; he was then rightly called the best knight in the world, but to call him so to-day would be a lie. As we read of his humiliation there come to our minds the words of S. Bernard, 'humilitas est virtutum bonum quoddam ac stabile firmamentum.'¹³

The approaching departure has troubled the court, but no one is more distressed than Guenevere. Lancelot tells her he will soon return, but in her heart she knows otherwise.

Lancelot having set out, he soon is made to feel that he is an outcast. When, by the power of the Grail, a wounded knight is healed in his sight, and, inspired, he would rise to hurry on his search for the holy vessel, he hears a voice calling

¹³ S. Bernard. *Sermones de diversis*, 91.

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to him : ' Lancelot, plus durs que pierre, plus amers que fuz, plus nuz et plus depris que figuiers, comment fus tu si hardiz que tu ou leu ou li sainz graalx reperast osas entrer? Va t'en de ci.'

The effect of this on him is powerful ; he goes away weeping, cursing the day on which he was born, and repenting his sins. He has reached that necessary preliminary condition for the reception of grace. ' The beginning of our salvation is from God, but the consent of the will and the work performed, although they do not originate from us, nevertheless are not without us,' says S. Bernard.¹⁴ In this state he comes upon the dwelling of a hermit, from whom he asks for an explanation of the words he has heard. This is not forthcoming at once. Instead, he is told the parable of the rich man who left his servants to negotiate against his return. In a manner that again recalls S. Bernard's notion of the importance of the natural gifts, the hermit tells him how his talents have availed him nothing. Showing him a crucifix, the hermit now exhorts Lancelot to repent and confess. The beginning of good works is ' not without us,' and Lancelot shows his co-operation by confessing. After this the hermit explains to him that his sins make him as hard as a stone, and that where such hardness is there can be no sweetness, therefore he is bitter. He is also like that fig-tree of the Gospel that was rich in leaves and branches, but devoid of fruit, for he is without good works. Again, S. Bernard's words are recalled to us : ' Truly there is a close analogy between fig-trees and people who are frail in their flesh, little in their intelligence, and, to complete the comparison, whose first fruits are green and earthly. However, I do not deny that in the end they will bring forth the fruits of faith if at the last *they shall have made a good confession.*'¹⁵

So far Lancelot has been restored to Grace, but there has been no speculation upon the loss of liberty. The only prob-

¹⁴ *De Gratia et libero arbitrio*, Chap. 14.

¹⁵ Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, lx.

lem now is for him to remain in that state of grace, since otherwise, as the hermit tells him, it is useless for him to go on with the *Queste*. Neither he, nor Galaad, nor anyone, can hope to succeed unless they keep themselves from mortal sins and withhold their thoughts from worldly desires. If the Holy Ghost does not lead them, earthly chivalry is of no avail. This *Queste* is undertaken to discover the marvels of the Holy Grail, promised to the True Knight. Even the True Knight would fail if he loses Grace, but he has rejected earthly things and given himself to heavenly chivalry. Surely here we have some suggestion of the meaning and purpose of the *Queste*. Yet here the only thought, the only problem, is to keep from sin that dismisses Grace from the soul. It is not surprising, then, that M. Pauphilet does not think that the author is concerned with the problem of grace, at least as that problem is commonly understood.

In the school of S. Bernard, he who has confessed and received Grace must then pass through a period of humiliation. * *Toute conversion d'après S. Bernard commence nécessairement par une acte d'abjection. Lorsque le pécheur arrive à connaître son état, quand il voit ce qu'il est, par opposition à ce qu'il devrait être, ne conçoit-il pas le mépris de lui-même?* ¹⁶ We need not be surprised, therefore, that when a valet whom the old Lancelot would presumably have chastised, upbraids him for his past sins, he only asks God to help him to be better.

The next stage in his spiritual journey is reached when he encounters a second holy man, who himself is lamenting the death and probable damnation of a fellow religious for having worn fine garments next his skin. This hermit recalls to Lancelot the days of his youth, when he possessed all the virtues; Chastity, Humility, Patience, Justice, Charity. All of these he lost because his will was unrestrained. The devil, however, attacked him in his flesh and, like Samson, Solomon, and Absalom, he fell. Increasing in fervour and repentance,

¹⁶ Pourrat. *La Spiritualité Chrétienne*, Vol. II, p. 41.

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Lancelot, at the hermit's request, puts on a hair shirt, 'qui mout estoit aspre et poignant.' He confesses, too, to a preference for his new life over the old. For has he not, as S. Bernard would say, tasted the freedom of Grace—the freedom from sin which leads finally to the freedom from misery? 'There is certainly some pleasure in the good things of the body—namely, in eating and drinking, warming oneself, and the other like comforts or coverings of the flesh. But can it be said that even in these matters we are wholly free from misery Accordingly it is only contemplatives who in this life are in any degree able to enjoy freedom of pleasure.'¹⁷

Lancelot, under Divine Guidance and in daily prayer, growing stronger, maintains himself in his good resolutions and keeps to the state of Grace. One might now expect a disciple brought up in the school of S. Bernard to reach the stage of mystical visions. Lancelot, indeed, begins to have certain visions, though at first they are not altogether devoid of sadness. Still, he is approaching the last stage that will end in ecstasy. Asleep at the foot of a crucifix, he sees a number of Kings and two Knights, one old and the other young. Christ, accompanied by Angels, comes out of the heavens, and, having blessed the Kings, He comes to the two Knights. To the elder He says: 'Fui t'en de ci, car j'ai perdu quan que avoie mis en toi. Tu ne m'as pas esté fil, mes fillastre; tu ne m'as pas esté amis, mes guerriers. Je te di que je te confondrai, se tu ne me renz mon trésor.' On hearing these words the Knight, overcome with sorrow, flees among the others and cries for mercy. The figure of Christ comes to him and says: 'If you will, I will love you; if you will, I will hate you.' Christ then goes to the younger, and calling him 'Biax fils,' says that he may go out over the whole world and 'voler sus tote chevalerie.' It is needless to point out that the two Knights are Lancelot and Galaad, and though Lancelot is not treated with tenderness, yet the vision reveals him nearer than before to God. Another vision recalls his sins and tells him of the punishment for a relapse.

¹⁷ *De Gratia et libero arbitro*, Chap. 5.

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A happier lot is now in store for him, and after he has passed through the dangers at the waters of Corbenic a voice comes to him in his sleep, telling him to embark upon the first ship he sees. Once there, he is conscious of sweet odours, and feels like one who has fed upon the rarest delicacies. Now begins the journey that is to lead to his ecstasy. On this boat he is joined by Galaad, and they dwell together for half a year in great happiness. When Galaad has gone he remains alone for another month, and finally arrives at the Grail Castle. Entering in, he finds the room in which the Grail is kept, but he is upbraided for trying to approach it. But its attraction is irresistible and, going into the room, he feels, as it were, arms about him and a great heat, so that his senses leave him, and he is wrapt in ecstasy. Twenty-four days he remains like this, one day for each year of his sinful life.

Nothing is more in harmony with the teaching of S. Bernard than this vision, the culminating point of the spiritual life, the temporary enjoyment of the freedom of pleasure away from misery, and a foreshadowing of that supreme liberty—the liberty of glory. But, as S. Bernard tells us, it is only too short a joy. ‘Heu! rara hora et parva mora,’¹⁸ cries the Saint. ‘Ha Dex! porquoit m’avez vos si tost esveillié’ are Lancelot’s waking words.

‘In this manifestation God vouchsafes to visit in person the soul that seeks him provided that she devotes herself with all desire and love to his holy quest.’ And a sign of His coming to us shall be . . . that *a fire* shall go before him . . . then shall the soul know that her Lord is nigh when *she feels herself inflamed with that fire.*¹⁹

Nothing could be clearer than that the Doctrine of the *Queste* is that of the School of S. Bernard, nothing more apparent than that the author insists throughout upon the need of Grace. But yet, in what sense are we here faced with the problem of Grace? The need for Grace is brought home to Lancelot as to

¹⁸ Sermon on the Canticle, xxiii, 15.

¹⁹ Sermon on the Canticle, xxxi.

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a man who is devoid of it, but his holy teachers seem to take it for granted that he is a sufficiently well-instructed Christian to know what is required of him.

If we are to see any other than a literary purpose in the *Queste*, surely it is that of providing a practical guide to the love of God. Consequently, the philosophical problem will be absent from the author's main purpose and that is clearly what M. Pauphilet means by 'l'éternel débat du libre arbitre et de l'omnipotence divine.' When, on the other hand, M. Gilson says that we must approach the question from a theological point of view²⁰ and seek for a solution in distinguishing not between Grace and free will, but between the power of the will and the Good, even this restatement does not reveal to us the author's main purpose. Both the philosophical and the theological problem will naturally, though not necessarily consciously, underlie any treatment of Grace. M. Gilson would, therefore, be able to judge the author's opinion upon these points even though they be only understood; but to M. Pauphilet, who is presumably concerned to discover the author's main purpose, the latter's treatment of his subject must appear so practical that problems would be out of place. He is not making an appeal to the intelligence but seeking to move the will. In this the mysticism of the *Queste* again resembles its model for, 'La Mystique de St Bernard ne se présente pas sous forme de synthèse; elle est exposée d'une manière oratoire. Elle n'a d'ailleurs aucun caractère scientifique: elle est essentiellement pratique.'²¹

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²¹ Pourrat. *Spiritualité Chrétienne*, Vol. 2, p. 98.

²⁰ *Romania*, li, p. 327, note.

‘Chievrefueil’ and Thomas’ ‘Tristan’

(Read before the Society on December 6th, 1928.)

IN the opening verses of her lay of *Chievrefueil*, Marie de France refers to a complete written *Tristan* romance as one of her sources. What this version was has never been determined. During the last century, medieval scholars regarded it variously as a Breton or Cornish or Welsh *Tristan* poem. Since the overthrow of these theories by M. Bédier, Marie’s written version has usually been held to be the Archetype. I shall attempt to show that it was very likely the poem of Thomas, and, moreover, that the place, in Thomas’ poem, from which Marie drew the setting for her lay, can in all probability be determined.

The evidence pointing to Marie’s use of Thomas’ *Tristan* is very varied in character and value. In the first place, as the Italian scholar, Ezio Levi, has revealed, Marie’s *Chievrefueil* differs somewhat in character from her other lays; it may almost be regarded as forming a class in itself. Whereas the latter belong to the longer narrative type of poem, *Chievrefueil* is brief, and more lyrical in character; and, unlike the others, seems more adapted to recitation to the accompaniment of music.

For this reason *Chievrefueil* resembles the lays which are mentioned as sung by *Tristan* in the poem of Thomas. Marie also mentions that *Tristan* was a renowned harper of lays, and had made a lay out of the *Chievrefueil* incident. An echo of this is found later in the Prose Romance, where *Tristan* harps a lay of *Chievrefueil* while being entertained at the house of Bréhus. The notion of *Tristan* as a harper of lays, however, and the specific references to *Tristan* lays, are not traceable to the Archetype; they are only found in Thomas, and later in the Prose Romance. But the evidence is inconclusive.

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Thomas might have drawn these features from Marie, as M. Foulet has suggested.

The second piece of evidence is less open to criticism. Marie, in describing the love of Tristan and Iseut, inserts the refrain :

‘ Bele amie, si est de nous :
Ne vos sanz moi, ne moi sanz vos ! ’

Levi considered that Marie was here purposely giving the exact antithesis of a refrain which must have occurred in Thomas. Thomas is not extant in this part, but Gottfried preserves the refrain in its French form :

‘ Isôt ma drûe, Isôt m’âmie
En vûs ma mort, en vûs ma vie ! ’

Thomas himself has a couplet which seems to refer to it :

‘ La bele raïne s’amie
En cui est sa mort et sa vie.’

Now in Gottfried the refrain comes logically into the sequence of the context. Tristan arrives at the castle of Kaherdin in Brittany, and through Iseut of the White Hands remembers Iseut of Cornwall. He then sings lays of love to the Knights of the Castle, and Gottfried says that he used to end his lays with this couplet.

But in Marie’s poem the refrain, worded in the first person, occurs in the author’s description of Tristan and Iseut’s love ; and the transition is exceedingly abrupt and awkward. It is difficult, therefore, to believe that Marie introduced this refrain, and that Thomas copied it, as M. Foulet has, nevertheless, supposed.

An examination of the subject-matter of *Chiehrefueil*, however, furnishes new and striking evidence. It seems to show that Marie not only utilised Thomas’ poem, but took the setting for her story from one particular episode in the Anglo-Norman *Tristan* romance. This is the episode of Petitcru. In Thomas, after the ordeal by red-hot iron, Mark must have again suspected the lovers ; for Tristan goes away to Wales, where

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Urgan le Velu is slain, and whence Petitcru is sent to Iseut. After the Petitcru episode, Iseut sends for Tristan, and tells him that he is again pardoned, and may return to court.

Now all these features, save, of course, the Petitcru incident itself, are found in *Chievrefueil*, although there they have no real *raison d'être*. The theme of *Chievrefueil* is only that of the lovers' secret meeting and the necessity of their parting, yet Marie introduces a feature which definitely weakens the force of this theme. When the lovers meet, Iseut tells Tristan that he will soon be pardoned by the King. (How she is able to prophesy this we are not told.)

Et ele li dist son plesir,
Puis li mostra comfaitement
Du roi avra acordement
Et que molt li avoit pesé
De ce qu'il l'ot si congéé.

Further, in describing the parting, Marie says :

Tristram a Gales s'en rala
Tant que son oncle le manda.

This feature in *Chievrefueil* exactly resembles Iseut's narration to Tristan of his pardoning by Mark at the end of the Petitcru episode in Thomas. In *Chievrefueil* this promise of Tristan's pardon not only has no place in the story : it does not harmonise with the theme. Its presence can only be explained by regarding it as due to the introduction, into *Chievrefueil*, of the setting of Thomas' *Petitcru* incident. Likewise Marie's description, at the beginning of her poem, of Tristan's misery when separated from Iseut, is very similar to that at the beginning of the Petitcru episode in Thomas (as far as we can judge from his derivatives). M. Bédier has rendered it in his reconstruction : ' Un jour il advint que Tristan était assis, triste et pensif . . . et parce que sa consolation, son amour et sa joie étaient au loin, il poussait sans cesse des soupirs profonds et songeait à sa douleur.'

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Scholars have always been puzzled by Marie’s lines, describing Tristan’s departure from Mark’s court :

En sa contree en est alez
En Suhtgales ou il fu nez !

Similarly, after the *Chievrefueil* incident, Marie states : ‘Tristram a Gales s’en rala.’ This could, nevertheless, have been due to a misconception of Thomas’ account in the *Petitcru* incident. There, as in *Chievrefueil*, Tristan goes away to Wales, and sends Iseut *Petitcru* from Wales. Marie could easily have assumed from this that Wales was Tristan’s native land, though Thomas, of course, does not state this.

In describing the gathering of Mark’s court, Marie says :

. . . . li baron erent bani ;
A Tintagel doivent venir ;
Le rois i vult sa cort tenir.

This can only mean that the court was to be at Tintagel, but that this was not the usual place for Mark’s court. Now in one only of the extant *Tristan* poems Mark hold his court in two places, namely, the poem of Thomas. There the court is usually at London, but occasionally at Tintagel : Marie’s lines reflect this exactly.

Nothing is to be drawn from the many forms of the hero’s name in *Chievrefueil*, and the name of *Iseut* does not occur. It is worth noting, however, that the form of the name of Brangien in Marie’s poem is *Brengvein*. In Thomas it is usually *Bringvain*. The form in *Chievrefueil* resembles that in Thomas more nearly than that in any other version.

There seems every likelihood that Marie knew and utilised Thomas’ poem. Ezio Levi has established that the king to whom Marie dedicated her lays was the Young King Henry, son of Henry II of England. The other theory, that of M. Foulet, would identify the King with Henry II himself. Thomas, in all probability, wrote his poem at the court of Henry II in London. He shows a first-hand knowledge of that city, devotes great praise to it, and has, for the greater part

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of his work, preferred London to Tintagel as a setting for Mark's court.

It seems highly probable, from this evidence, that Marie substituted her *Chievrefueil* episode (the source of which I shall not attempt to discuss) for the Petitruc story in Thomas' *Tristan*, but preserved for her story Thomas' setting. This would explain several unusual features in Marie's poem. It would also be additional evidence of the reputation enjoyed by the Anglo-Norman poet, to whom we owe the *Tristan*; and possibly also, according to M. Ferd. Lot's latest view, the romance of *Horn et Rimenhild* and the inedited *Roman de Waldef*.

E. S. MURRELL.

Miscellanea

A NOTE ON WOLFRAM VON ESCHENBACH, PARZIVAL 468. 5—9.

(Read before the Society on December 6th, 1928.)

IN the ninth book of his *Parzival* Wolfram describes the hero's visit to Trevrizent, the Grail-Prince who is living as a hermit in order to atone for his and his family's shortcomings. Trevrizent gives Parzival much counsel, saying among other things :

‘ Wert ir erfunden an rechter e,
Iu mac zer helle werden we,
Diu not sol schiere ein ende han,
Und wert von banden alda verlan
Mit der gotes helfe al sunder twal.

Bartsch translates and comments as follows : ‘“ [Werdet Ihr] ” erfunden als in rechter Ehe lebend, so könnt ihr (aus anderen Gründen, wegen anderer Sünden) in der Hölle Pein erdulden ; allein euer Wohlverhalten in der Ehe wird euch bald aus der Hölle befreien.’ Der hohe Wert, welchen der Dichter auf die sittliche Reinheit der Ehe hier und anderwärts legt, bestätigt uns, was wir aus anderen Quellen auch wissen, daß es in seiner Zeit damit nicht sonderlich stand.’ These lines appeared therefore to Bartsch, as they would to most modern readers, to promise unconditional salvation to all true and faithful husbands.

I do not think that Wolfram held the extraordinary view, which Bartsch apparently attributes to him, that any thief or murderer was sure of eventual admittance to Heaven, provided that he had treated his wife well. That would indeed be a Married Man's Charter ! I believe that he was writing with a confused recollection of a precept which is found in many mediaeval sermons on marriage. A passage in Berthold von Regens-

burg's 21st German sermon (ed. Pfeiffer-Strobl) makes Wolfram's meaning—or what should have been his meaning—perfectly clear. Berthold says: 'Alle die da reht und redeliche zere komment, die heizent eliute. Die sint *uf dem rehten wege* zem himelriche, *irret eht sie anders niht.*' Ever since the Fall mankind had been the helpless victim of his body, and there were only three roads along which the Christian could hope to make his way past the pitfalls it prepares, to the Gate of Heaven. The three roads were 'diu heilige e,' holy matrimony; 'witwetuom,' widowhood, by which Berthold means having sinned and then repented; and 'magettuom,' the pure virgin life. The last-named involved becoming a monk, for no unmarried man could possibly escape the continual temptation to which he was exposed, unless he joined an order and obtained the support of its rule. Marriage was simply an approved safeguard against temptation; not by any means an assurance of ultimate salvation. Wolfram overlooked the important proviso: 'irret eht sie anders niht.'

J. K. BOSTOCK.

NOTES ON MALORY'S SOURCES¹

(Read before the Society on December 6th, 1928.)

THE origin of Malory's version of the story of the death of Arthur (Books xvii—xxi) has been a subject of controversy for the last forty years. The question at stake is whether Malory's source was French or English, and the balance of opinion tends to the former view (cf. J. D. Bruce's study in *Anglia*, xxiii, p. 67 ff). Yet the final proof is still wanting, and the researches of Bruce and Mead (*Selections from the Morte Darthur*) have failed to provide it. I would, therefore, like to put forward what seems to me to be unmistakable evidence that the source of Malory's Book xviii was French.

¹ Another paper on Malory was read by the President at a meeting held on 14th June, 1928. It has since been included in his book on Malory (chapters III and IV), which is at present in the press.—ED.

In the first chapter of the book he says that Lancelot and Guenevere 'had suche prevy draughtes to gyder that many in the Courte spake of hit, and in especial syr Agravayne, syr Gawayns broder, *for he was ever open mouthed*' (p. 725, l. 22 of Sommer's edition). So, according to Malory, Agravain spoke of Lancelot's guilty love for Guenevere because it was his habit to gossip. This seems, at first sight, a satisfactory explanation, but the reason given in the French *Mort Artu* is distinctly preferable; there the sentence reads: '*por çou k'il (=Agravain) beast le roi a vengier de sa honte*' (MS. Bibl. Nat. fr. 342, f. 151 r, col. 2. So in most MSS. and in J. D. Bruce's edition). The sentence literally means: 'because he intended to revenge the King's dishonour.' Why, then, did Malory introduced the 'open mouthed' Agravain? Two explanations are forthcoming: either he used an imperfect manuscript in which the words '*le roi a vengier de sa honte*' were missing, and so naturally took the verb *beer* in its sense of 'to be wide open'; or, if his manuscript was as complete as MS. 342, he simply misunderstood it. In either case the word *beer* must have been in his immediate source, and this source was, therefore, French.

Another mistake in French helps to determine with greater precision than has hitherto been possible Malory's relation to the Huth MS. (British Museum, Huth No. 4) of the *Merlin* which contains a version very similar to Books I—IV of the *Morte Darthur*. Malory says (p. 64 of Sommer's edition) that 'after the departyng of Kyng Ban and of Kyng Bors, Kyng Arthur rode unto Carlyon, and thyder came to hym Kyng Lots wyf or Orkeney.' This is unintelligible, because King Arthur was at that time already in Caerlion and could not have ridden there. The key to the mystery is only found in the Huth MS., which reads (f. 75 v, col. 1): '*Ore dist que un rois² après le couronnement le roi Artu vint a une grant court que li rois*

² Probably a scribal error. The editors of the Huth MS. (G. Paris and J. Ulrich) suggest *mois*,

*semonst a Carduel*³ *en Gales la feme le roi Loth d'Orkanie.*' It is obvious that *le roi Artu* is genitive, and that the sentence means: '. . . after Arthur's coronation the wife of King Loth of Orkeney came to a court which the King (i.e., Arthur) held at Carduel.' Malory interpreted *le roi Artu* as nominative, made it the subject of the clause, and so caused Arthur to travel from Caerlion to Caerlion. Yet, by so doing, he also made it possible for us to ascertain that the Huth MS. is the nearest extant representative of the source which he used for his story of Merlin.

³ Here as elsewhere Malory renders Carduel by Caerlion.

EUGENE VINAVER.

A paper was read to the Society on February 9th, 1928, by Mr. D. F. Aitken, entitled, '*The Voyage à l'Aventure* in the Tristan of Thomas,' and has already appeared in the *Modern Language Review*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, pp. 468-472.

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